

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EC ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL, LUXEMBOURG, OCTOBER 16: BRITISH DO
IT AGAIN

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AT THE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 16,
THE BRITISH REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH THE OTHER EC MEMBER
STATES IN THE APPLICATION OF COMMON EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS
FOR PRODUCTS ON THE COMMISSION'S "BLACK LIST", A LISTING OF
A LIMITED NUMBER OF HIGHLY TOXIC POLLUTANTS SUCH AS MERCURY,
CADMIUM, CANCEROGENOUS SUBSTANCES, ETC. THIS WAS THE SECOND
TIME IN TWO WEEKS THAT THE BRITISH HELD OUT AGAINST AN 8 TO 1
DECISION IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (THE PREVIOUS OCCASION
INVOLVED BRITISH INSISTENCE ON A SEPARATE SEAT AT THE
PRODUCER-CONSUMER CONFERENCE DURING THE FOREIGN MINISTERS
COUNCIL OCTOBER 6-7). THE BRITISH ACTION AT THE ENVIRONMENT
COUNCIL WAS RECEIVED WITH VARYING DEGREES OF DISAPPOINTMENT
AND ANGER. A SENIOR GERMAN PERMDEL. OFFICIAL PREDICTED
THAT IN VIEW OF THE UK'S STANDS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS, THE
GERMAN GOVERNMENT WOULD RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE BRITISH ACTIONS
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AT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL (HEADS OF GOVERNMENT) MEETING IN ROME

DECEMBER 1 AND 2 IN AN EFFORT TO FIND OUT "IF THE BRITISH REALLY INTEND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY AT ALL." END SUMMARY.

2. EMISSION CONTROLS VS. QUALITY STANDARDS: THE EC COUNCIL OF ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTERS HELD ONE OF ITS INFREQUENT MEETINGS IN LUXEMBOURG ON OCTOBER 16. THE DAYS' DISCUSSIONS WERE HIGHLIGHTED BY THE BRITISH REFUSAL TO ACCEPT EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS FOR EITHER A "BLACK LIST" HIGHLY TOXIC POLLUTANTS OR A "GREY LIST" OF LESS NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES, AND THEIR INSISTENCE THAT THE EC ADOPT DIFFERENTIATED CONTROLS BASED ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN PARTICULAR REGIONS. THE BRITISH MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, MR. HOWELL, SAID THAT IT WAS THE BRITISH POSITION THAT "THE PRIMARY APPROACH TO POLLUTION CONTROL MUST BE THROUGH THE SETTING OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OBJECTIVES..THE EC IS TOO BIG AND EMISSION CONDITIONS VARY TOO WIDELY FOR ANY APPROACH BASED ON DETAILED CONTROL OF EMISSIONS TO BE EFFECTIVE". HOWELL CONTINUED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO WEIGH THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR POLLUTION CONTROL AGAINST THE ACTUAL BENEFITS PRODUCED AND THAT, FOR BRITAIN, THE ADOPTION OF EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS WAS NOT THE ANSWER. ALL EIGHT OTHER MEMBER STATES OBJECTED TO THE BRITISH POSITION WITH FRG ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTER MAIHOFFER TAKING THE LEAD. MAIHOFFER URGED THAT MORE FUNDS BE SPENT THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS AND ARGUED THAT IF UNIFORM STANDARDS, BASED ON EMISSION CONTROLS, WERE NOT ADOPTED BY THE COMMUNITY A DISTORTION OF COMPETITION WOULD RESULT. OTHER DELEGATIONS EMPHASIZED, AS WELL, THAT EUROPEAN HARMONIZATION IN THIS AREA SHOULD PRECEDE THE CONCLUSION OF ANY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS (E.G. POLLUTION OF THE RHINE) FOR THE SAME REASON. HOWELL TERMED THE GERMAN ARGUMENT "A COMPLETE FALLACY" SAYING THAT THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH A PARTICULAR FIRM OPERATED WAS MERELY A FACT OF LIFE AND THAT USING THE GERMAN ANALYSIS THEY SHOULD SUBSIDIZE THOSE FIRMS NOT LOCATED ON THE RHINE BECAUSE THESE FIRMS WERE UNABLE TO BENEFIT FROM CONVENIENT AND INEXPENSIVE WATER TRANSPORT. HOWELL WENT ON TO CITE AN "OECD STUDY" (NOT FURTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IDENTIFIED) STATING THAT ATTEMPTS TO HARMONIZE STANDARDS INTERNATIONALLY PRODUCED RATHER THAN REMOVED, DISTORTIONS OF TRADE.

3. THE BRITISH STAND RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM WITH THE GERMANS SAYING THAT IT WAS A BRITISH ATTEMPT TO MORALLY CORRUPT" THE COMMUNITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY. THE FRENCH MINISTER JERROT SAID THE BRITISH WERE

PREACHING THE "POLICY OF THE OSTRICH", WHILE THE IRISH ASSERTED THEY WERE "GREATLY DISTURBED" BY THE BRITISH ATTITUDE. EC COMMISSION ENVIRONMENTAL DIRECTOR STANLEY JOHNSON COMMENTED THAT SOME WAY MUST NOW BE FOUND TO SOLVE THE "POLITICAL DIFFICULTY" BUT THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME THE COMMISSION HAD NO IDEA WHAT ITS NEXT MOVE WOULD BE. A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE GERMAN PERM. DEL. SAID THAT THE GERMANS WERE "FED UP WITH" THE BRITISH ACTIONS OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS; HE PREDICTED THAT THE FRG WOULD BRING THE UK'S REFUSAL TO GO ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY ON THIS ISSUE AND ON THE PRODUCER-CONSUMER CONFERENCE UP FOR DISCUSSION AT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL. THE GERMAN SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD ASK THE BRITISH "STRAIGHT OUT" IF THEY WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY OR NOT.

4. THE COMMISSION, AIDED BY THE IRISH, DUTCH AND GERMANS, TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO OBTAIN BRITISH AGREEMENT TO A COMPROMISE WHEREBY EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS WOULD BE APPLIED TO THOSE PERSISTENT AND HIGHLY TOXIC POLLUTANTS ON THE COMMISSION'S "BLACK LIST", WHILE QUALITY CONTROL STANDARDS, FORMULATED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES, WOULD BE APPLIED TO THOSE POLLUTANTS ON THE COMMISSION'S "GREY LIST". THIS ATTEMPT FAILED AND HOWELL RESPONDED IN AN EVEN MORE FIRM FASHION BY SAYING THAT "HE SAW NO PROSPECT OF OUR BEING ABLE TO AGREE TO ENVIRONMENTAL EMISSION STANDARDS FOR PAPER PULP, TITANIUM DIOXIDE AND OTHER SECTORS OF INDUSTRY."

5. COMMUNITY OBSERVERS ATTRIBUTE THE BRITISH POSITION TO A COMBINATION OF THE LACK OF INTEREST IN THE MATTER BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EFFORTS BY BRITISH INDUSTRY WHICH IS ILL PREPARED TO SPEND THE RELATIVELY LARGE SUMS REQUIRED FOR EMISSION CONTROLS, ESPECIALLY UNDER THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. OTHER COUNCIL ACTIONS: THE COUNCIL WAS ABLE, HOWEVER, TO TAKE ACTION A NUMBER OF PENDING ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS. THE MINISTERS APPROVED A DECISION INSTITUTING A COMMON PROCEDURE FOR AN INVENTORY OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT (SEE USEC A-038, JAN. 31, 1975); HAD AN INITIAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE SECOND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNITY (COPY SENT TO WOLFE, EUR/RPE); AND APPROVED A COMMISSION PROPOSAL CONCERNING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE EEC AND NEGOTIATIONS TO PROTECT THE MEDITERRANEAN

AGAINST MARINE POLLUTION AT BARCELONA. THE COUNCIL FURTHER APPROVED COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RHINE FROM POLLUTION AND AGREED ON THE HARMONIZATION OF MEMBER STATE LAWS RELATING TO THE SULPHUR CONTENT OF CERTAIN LIQUID FUELS AS LAID OUT IN AN EARLIER COMMISSION PROPOSAL (SEE USEC A-356, NOV. 27, 1974). (UNDER THE LAST ITEM, IRELAND, BY "QUIET DIPLOMACY" OBTAINED A 10-YEAR DISPENSATION FROM SULPHUR CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR GAS OIL USED IN POWER PRODUCTION.) THE MINISTERS ALSO AGREED TO A PROPOSED COMMISSION DIRECTIVE SETTING QUALITY OBJECTIVES RELATING TO THE POLLUTION OF SEA WATER AND FRESH WATER USED FOR BATHING. (SEE USEC A108, MARCH 19, 1975).

7. ANOTHER MEETING OF THE EC MINISTERS ON ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 8 AT WHICH TIME THEY WILL MAKE ADDITIONAL EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE IMPASSE ON THE QUALITY STANDARDS VS. EMISSION CONTROLS ISSUES.
GREENWALD

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